

For Immediate Release
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(Washington, D.C.) - Rep. Albio Sires voted for a bipartisan Farm Bill that will strengthen American agriculture, help families facing high food costs and makes a substantial commitment to land conservation and energy independence. Officially titled the Farm, Nutrition, and Bio-energy Act, the legislation passed by a vote of 318-106 on Wednesday, May 14, 2008.

"With food prices soaring, consumers need all the help they can get," said Sires. "The new farm bill will help families having the hardest time making ends meet while increasing our conservation efforts so that our environment is protected."

Nearly three-quarters of the Farm Bill will support the domestic nutrition programs that allow 38 million households to purchase food. The updates to the food stamp program, renamed as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, will increase program participation by about 11 million people by 2012. The bill will also provide much-needed support to food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens by increasing funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP, by \$1.25 billion - with \$50 million for immediate shortages at food pantries. Additionally, the bill helps schools provide healthy snacks to students, with \$1 billion for free fresh fruits and vegetables.

To encourage conservation efforts, the Farm Bill boosts conservation programs that reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters by \$7.9 million.

This bill strengthens our energy independence. The Farm Bill invests \$1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources. It takes another critical step by transitioning bio-fuels beyond corn to non-food crops and sources such as switch grass, woodchips and corn stalks.

Finally, the legislation also begins to end payments to farmers who don't need the help, with the most significant reforms in over 30 years. The Farm Bill reduces direct farm payments by \$300 million and cuts federal payments to crop insurance companies that are making windfall profits due to higher crop prices by \$5.7 billion.

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